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ABSTRACT

An examination of the history of student dissent in British universities reveals recurring tensions involving social change and higher education. It is possible to perceive some similarities in the social dynamics of the various instances of dissent which have occurred over the last 700 years. A review of the research concerning the relationship between characteristics of British students and their level of activism defines the "Problem of Student Unrest" as person centered and often disregards the possible influence of external forces. (JMF)

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IS STUDENT DISSENT ALL OVER?

A LOOK AT THE BRITISH SCENE

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Student Life Studies

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Abstract

This paper presents a brief overview of student dissent in British Further and Higher Education. Then research findings concerning the characteristics of contemporary student dissenters are described and finally some social and political explanations of dissent are provided. Questions are raised concerning the assumptions underlying the research and theory about contemporary British student dissent.

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IS STUDENT DISSENT ALL OVER?
A LOOK AT THE BRITISH SCENE[1]

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Student dissent in Great Britain is a topic which does not lend itself to a simple clear-cut analysis or to sweeping generalizations, because obviously no one has yet provided either a theory or empirical data about dissent which can be universally applied to all situations. Student dissent in Britain involves complex relationships about which a variety of hypotheses could be appropriate.

Although academic discussion of dissent may no longer be fashionable in some circles, the issue is neither unimportant nor outdated. The Counselor and Student Personnel Worker in colleges and universities in the United States were virtually caught "sleeping" by the intensity of dissent in the 1960s. And it is no wonder that some of them may want to forget those "troubled times." Yet, there is much to be said for continued rational dialogue now since the temperature of many campuses has been lowered. This paper describes a brief overview of dissent in British Further and Higher Education with particular reference to present incidents. Then the paper reviews examples of British empirical research and theoretical explorations of factors related to dissent. It is hoped that this examination of British student dissent may stimulate

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1 Paper delivered at the University of Aston, December 12, 1974.

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research and theory about the still ambiguous factors surrounding student dissent in the United States and Britain.

A Brief Overview

Although there has been a long history of student protest in British universities (Fletcher, 1972), recent incidents of student dissent in British universities may represent a break with tradition. British student politics in the twentieth century have been notably peaceful. Although there was quite publicized student radical activities in the 1930s, the radical undergraduates were conventionally radical in their affiliation to adult "left wing" parties (Shils, 1969). Furthermore, even the new left movement which emerged after 1956 in some British universities was largely concerned with cultural critiques of the larger society rather than demonstrations (Lipset, 1971). Halsey and Marks (1969) have argued that presently an unfamiliar type of student movement may be emerging in British higher education.

1967 was a significant year for student protest in Great Britain. A group of Labor, Liberal and Communist students from the National Union of Students formed the Radical Student Alliance. The issue between this new group and the National Union was primarily over political methods. The Radical Student Alliance wanted to mobilize student support through demonstrations and petitions. At the first Radical Student Alliance Convention, held in January 1967, the Vice-Chairman of the Liberal Students' Union from the chair called for fundamental changes in the economic system, foreign policy and the way we govern ourselves. In an interview on September 18, 1966 in the London Sunday Telegraph, he was quoted as saying, "It's quite simple, we want to get rid of capitalism." These new student radicals appeared to

define their conflicts with the University authority as a part of the larger question of the legitimacy of the total British social system.

Other radical student organizations sprang up: The Revolutionary Socialist Students' Federation was formed at the London School of Economics in June 1968, and after the demise of the Radical Student Alliance, the Maoist Vietnam Front came into existence. At the Liverpool Conference in 1969, the National Union recommended changing a clause of their constitution which prohibited their discussion of political issues, and in 1970 at the Margate Conference, the change was ratified.

Radical students in the late 1960s were particularly angry about what they described as the Binary System of British Higher Education. Anthony Crosland, then Secretary of State for Education and Science, enunciated this (reputed) government policy in April 1965. The system appeared to segregate British universities into an automomous sector financed from the University Grants Committee and the rest of the collegiate institutions (the public sector) which received their money from local education authorities. According to David Adelstein (1969), a former president of the London School of Economics' Unions, "Underlying the Binary System is the fundamental gulf between theoretical and applied subjects, between the abstract and the practical, such that the one side veers toward dilettantism and the other towards mechanical specialism. This is the profound cultural schism that the Binary System creates and reinforces."

The next significant event in 1967 concerned the London School of Economics. In autumn 1966, the appointment of the new principal of the London School of Economics was being debated among students and

academic staff. The Student Union later clashed with school authorities about a rule which limited their freedom to write to the press about the issue. Early in January 1967, students called a meeting to consider direct action to stop the appointment of the new director. At this time they tried to enter an auditorium which had been banned for their use and in the confusion a porter died. The Board of Discipline was convened and although they dismissed the charges against most students involved in the incident, the Board found the President of the Student Union and the President of the Graduate Students' Association guilty.

Later in the year the suspensions of the two students were eventually dropped by the Board of Governors. Before this action was taken, the London School of Economics had become the scene of the "first major student strike Britain had ever known" (Blackstone, Gales, Hadley, & Lewis, 1970).

Finally, about the same time as the London School of Economics' student strike, four thousand students lobbied at Parliament against a decision by the Government to raise the fees charged to overseas students in universities and colleges. Students saw this government decision as a "dress rehearsal" for the introduction of loans as a partial substitute for, or alternative to, grants, and as a sign of an increasingly "Vocationalist" spirit in the Government's policies about higher education (Halsey and Marks 1969). Students were resisting, according to one Radical Student Alliance spokesman, a conversion of institutions of higher education into "battery farms for broiler technicians."

Warwick University in February 1970 was the scene of a rather

highly publicized protest. Students occupied the Registry, ostensibly because a University Building Committee had resisted a series of demands from students and academic staff concerning among other things, desegregation of the informal life of students and academic staff, and giving students increased control over their Union building. During the occupation, students opened the files and found apparent evidence of political discrimination in the confidential files of individual students. Since then, Thompson (1970) has edited a series of papers concerning Warwick University and the information found in the files during the occupation.

In March 1974 there were a number of British universities in which were emerging various patterns of student unrest. At Oxford University, hearings against eighteen undergraduates had been subject to constant interruption and obstruction. Oxford militants were demanding a single Students' Union. These disruptions also included an anti-demonstration called by the Oxford University Conservative Association. At the same time as the anti-demonstration, 350 militant and moderate left-wing students from Oxford and other institutions marched around Oxford and there were some incidents of destruction.

About the same time, James Polytechnic was temporarily closed down following an occupation of campus buildings by students. All academic and administrative staff were withdrawn, and all teaching, laboratory work, examinations and welfare services were abandoned. The Director called for national level guidelines as to what were the responsibilities of Student Unions.

In Kent University disturbances, the major issue involved a third year Philosophy student who had been sent down for not working.

Later a large number of academic staff at Kent refused to teach the students unless they ended the occupation. The National Union of Public Employees refused to do overtime for student sports and societies and catering staff threatened to refuse to provide meals. The incidents at Kent were reputed to include:

1. Use of alarm clocks to disrupt a lecture.
2. Forceful picketing of lectures to prevent lecturers and students from attending.
3. Breaking into a staff member's office and ordering him to leave during the occupation of Elliott College.
4. Using a blind student as a ruse to enter the Registry and then opening a window for students to storm the building.

In fall 1974 Kent University was still in the midst of unrest. Students held a "sit-in" protesting against the University's handling of the examinations procedure. They were angered by the way the University was 'removing" some students after their examinations at the end of their first year. Professor Guy Chilver (1974), former Dean of Humanities at Kent University, called for a stand against campus militants, "A great and difficult duty therefore rests with the University authorities, who ought (more quickly than has happened in some places), to issue a clear decisive and honest statement to all students directly the militants look like trying something on." He pleaded-- "What is needed quickly is for some responsible body - presumably the Committee of Vice-Chancelors and Principals - to put on paper, after advice from lawyers expert in this branch of law, what they think universities could do that they have not done, and what they ought to have been enabled to do if the law of a reasonable society allowed it."

In contrast, Professor Harry Rajack, a lecturer in law at King's College London (1974), argued against Professor Chilver, "Legal remedies are available, but there are also needed procedural requirements to preserve some minimal rights of those in occupation who may have a satisfactory answer to the allegations." He admitted that probably some students might have no intelligible or socially desirable objectives for their militancy. However, he went on, "The possibility that the nature of the institution may itself give rise to grievance, that (Heaven forbid) the authorities themselves may bear some responsibility, that a more appropriate approach than resort to the souring effect of legal remedy may be discussion of differences is not considered by Professor Chilver."

On April 30, 1974, the National Front, which is a political group of the extreme Right, booked a room in Conway Hall, Red Lion Square (London) for a meeting to take place on June 15th. This group was protesting against the Government's decision to grant an amnesty to illegal immigrants and to allow them to bring their relatives into Britain. After hearing of the proposed meeting, a left-wing group, the London Area Council of Liberation, booked a small room in Conway Hall for the same date. In the light of these developments, the National Union of Students became anxious and urged the Liberation demonstration to be cancelled. However, the International Marxist Group joined in with the Liberation group as part of a march on June 15th. The Marxist group led a charge into a police cordon positioned in front of Conway Hall. Later there was a confrontation between the National Front and the Marxist and Liberation marchers. During these Red Lion Square riots, a student from Warwick University died.

The National Union of Students in fall 1974 reported that government cuts in educational spending had "provoked widespread student militancy" with an "unprecedented level of militant action" at fourteen higher educational institutions. At Sussex University, students were protesting about rent increases; at Newcastle Polytechnic, they were protesting about inadequate housing; at Bristol University, they protested about a student who was refused a sabbatical because of his allegedly poor academic performance.

Sussex University authorities closed the Main Refectory when student leaders began deducting ten percent from the price of meals. These student activists had also occupied the University's telephone switchboard and blocked calls in protest at rising rent and food prices.

Militants invaded a meeting of the Academic Board at North London Polytechnic, and they disrupted a meeting of the Board of Governors, at which time the Director received a black eye! These militants were trying to prevent the administration from implementing a decision to cut student representation on academic and other boards.

Essex University

In fall 1974, Essex University provided students with a ballroom and several committee rooms which could be used exclusively by students until a proper student union could be built. This move appears to have been a significant policy change following a year of constant campus havoc.

In November 1973, Essex students were demonstrating for higher maintenance grants and there were some incidents in picket lines. A few days later students occupied the administrative offices and issued three "non-negotiable" demands. The University applied to the

High Court for a possession order which was granted but not enforced. The occupation ended in early December. However, the University would not accede to a student demand that no disciplinary action should be taken against any of the students involved in the occupation which caused just over £4,000 damage.

University disciplinary hearings were held in February 1974 and one student was expelled for one year. Pickets were then mounted and later barricades erected to close the main entrance of the University. In the middle of March, the maintenance staff, with the help of the police, removed these barriers. That day, 85 Essex University students were arrested and the next day, 200 students, mostly from other universities, forced their way into the Vice-Chancellor's office and held him under duress for two hours.

Toward the end of April, the National Union of Students organized a demonstration at the University. Three hundred and fifty militants, some of whom were visitors from other campuses, occupied a building preventing classes from taking place and forced the disciplinary committee to suspend its hearings. They also invaded the Vice-Chancellor's office and subjected him to questions. In early May, a University Appeal Commiteee suspended the expulsions and lessened the fines against two students who had been expelled.

Laura Kaufman (1974) analyzed the Essex situation and suggested that the setting of the Essex campus involved considerable physical concentration so that students could rather easily blockade the campus. She described the Essex governance structure as complex. Even though student representation was high, the committees were generally regarded as ineffective and slow and the Vice-Chancellor appeared to

make all decisions! Finally, she thought that since Essex University had no vocational schools, there was a preponderance of arts and social science students who were more prone to become militants.

Lord Annan, in his analysis of the Essex situation (1974) concluded that the University's Vice-Chancellor had been right when he took disciplinary action against students and he was right not to have suspended it when they began a picket. However, the Vice-Chancellor was criticized because he did not address students on the day 90 were arrested, and because he should have been more accessible to students... "A few informal contacts, a walk about, a visit to chat with students in a department, half an hour in the bar is worth dozens of formal meetings." Lord Annan also castigated militant students, "No one would doubt their sincerity; but equally the University authorities must regard them for what they are - wreckers." Also staff sympathizers were criticized for giving militant students information which, by their own account, was designed to harden opinion against the Vice-Chancellor's efforts to negotiate.

The Annan Report (1974) acknowledged that Essex students had a legitimate sense of grievance on three points. The first being the inadequacy of their grants, the second the relevancy of the curriculum, and the third being their claim that "academic staff were responsible for the design of the buildings and the living conditions on campus. They have made a mess of it and don't share those conditions because only a handful live on the campus. So let us, the students, take over the running of the place." The Report suggests that in the end the question at Essex which has to be resolved is that of campus governance.

The Annan Report recommended the provision of a separate students' union, and that discussions should be held on the relationships of staff to students and the style of these relationships. "It is vital to convey to students that to discuss outside the lecture room the subjects they are studying is part of a university education, and student societies - to which academic staff must give their time in the evenings after classes are over - are one way of doing so." Lord Annan also thought that many academic and social problems which affect good order in the university ought to be discussed openly in small groups.

Additionally, the Annan Report recommended that disciplinary procedures should be simplified and shortened. The Students' Handbook section on discipline was described as "singularly inadequate" for nowhere does it state succinctly what the University considers offenses. He suggested that the University consider having entering students sign a document stating that they know the disciplinary rules and would abide by them.

In an editorial in The Times Higher Education Supplement (1974), it was suggested that the Essex saga raised the wider question, "Has the whole Robbins' expansion produced a system of student conscripts and careerist faculty who see no real purpose in what they are doing?" The extent of this editorial generalization about Essex seems unwarranted. The May 28, 1974 Manchester Guardian reports that use of the University library for prolonged study was found to have remained as high as usual throughout the most disruptive episodes, and on most days it was higher than at the same time the year before. The figures revealed no sign that the pattern of study in the library was affected

by the peaks of action and tension "supposedly" being experienced by the student community. Furthermore, the December 8, 1975 London Times reported that after a year of troubles, only two of the students' five general meetings during fall 1974 had managed to reach a quorum. Only 12% of the students voted in the Student Council elections, and nine of the 31 seats were won by conservative student candidates.

The Characteristics of Students and Dissent

The February 1967 demonstration at the London School of Economics (LSE) was the focus of a study by Blackstone, Gales, Hadley and Lewis (1970). What follows is a brief summary of their findings.

Seventy-nine percent of all the students regarded the London School of Economics' sit-in and boycott as either wholly or partly justified. Differences between undergraduates and postgraduates, and between Home and Overseas students' attitudes about the sit-in and boycott were slight. Between 69% and 80% of all students at LSE regarded petitions, protest meetings and the lobbying of members of staff as wholly justified; between 42% and 54% viewed protest marches, a sit-in without immobilizing the school, a boycott of lectures and classes and picketing as wholly justified; and 22% would have regarded a sit-in immobilizing the school as wholly justified.

Forty-nine percent of all students participated in the boycott, and thirty-six percent of all students participated in the sit-in on one or more days. Younger students were more likely to have regarded the boycott and the sit-in as wholly justified and to have participated in each.

Among British students, support showed only slight variations with fathers' occupations, and school background of the British undergraduates bore slight relationship to support for the protest. Academic

achievement also showed no significant relationship with support. Political party allegiance was found to be related to level of students' support. Only 19% of the Conservatives regarded the sit-in as wholly justified. Among undergraduates, 61% of the Sociologists compared with 32% of the Statisticians and Accountants, and 25% of the Geographers took part in the sit-in. Among postgraduates, the figures were 44%, 24% and 14% respectively. Year of school showed a small relationship with support. Frequency of attendance at Union meetings was very strongly related to support.

Dissatisfaction with various aspects of the School was related to support for the protest. The strongest relationship concerned dissatisfaction with staff contacts. For example, 56% of the undergraduates who were very dissatisfied with staff contacts, compared with 28% of those who were very satisfied, regarded the sit-in as wholly justified. Support for the protest was also related to attitudes toward student representation on school committees. Seventy-seven percent of those wanting a student majority on disciplinary committees, compared with 5% of those wanting neither consultation nor representation, regarded the sit-in as wholly justified.

The London School of Economics' survey presented no evidence that extreme activists or all participators in the protest came disproportionately within the School from students of above-average ability.

A similar study of students at a London Technical College was completed about the same time as the LSE research (Mott and Goldie, 1970). These students had been involved in a series of confrontations with the authorities over the formation of an autonomous Students' Union and study facilities.

Two hundred and twenty students at this college were surveyed and an index of militancy was constructed; four factors were obtained from an analysis of the responses, and one of these factors was used to give students a militancy rating. Three groups were compared: The "most militant" 20% of the sample, the "most militant" 10% and the most "anti-militant" 20%.

Most militant students described themselves as working class or lower middle class and did not expect upward social mobility. Social class was inversely related to level of militancy. Students with fathers in higher or lower professions, or fathers in clerical occupations tended to be less militant. The militant student was more likely to acknowledge working class parents and not accept a "meritocratic ideology." The more militant students generally claimed to be indifferent or opposed to career ambitions and many hoped to be academics or social workers. Although a relationship between militancy and membership in the Social Sciences Course versus Engineering Course was found, the authors also identified Engineering militants and Social Sciences anti-militants.

The most militant students claimed to have got on best with their mother, or to a lesser extent, not to have got on well with either parent. Female and male militancy were roughly at the same level. Militant students were likely to describe themselves as agnostics. Militancy was associated with consistency in parental political outlook. But 56% of the most militant supported the three main political parties.

The most militant students expressed more dissatisfaction with their education and contacts with the staff than the others. Thirty-two percent of the "most militant," as contrasted with 66% of the "most anti-militant," were satisfied with the education they had

received at the College. Mott and Goldie concluded "Our findings seem to offer little support to the theory of student militancy as symbolic parricide although a surprisingly large proportion of militant students expressed a preference for an autocratic family system.

Salter (1974) argues that the early and mid-sixties saw the growth of two separate student subcultures called "hippie" and "radical." The former was retreatist while the latter addressed itself to the problem of political activism. Salter thinks we are witnessing a reapproachment between these two groups and they are merging to produce an alternative culture with a self-sustained identity.

In order to test this theory, he administered a questionnaire to all first year students at Enfield College of Technology (now part of Middlesex Polytechnic). Respondents indicated how much representation they thought students should have (majority, equality, minority consultation, none at all) in five areas of college decision-making. Militants and non-militants were then characterized by the consistency of their attitudes towards the students' role in college decision-making.

Neither standard socio-economic variables nor the party preference of parents had any significant relationship to the political stance of students. Student militancy was highly related to the types of secondary schools attended. Non-militants were twice as likely as militants to come from a public school and nearly three times as likely to have attended a secondary modern school. Militants were six times more likely than non-militants to have come from a comprehensive school.

The relationship between militancy and "A" level subjects studied at school was significant, but the results were not always in the expected directions. Even though liberal arts and social studies pupils

were more likely to be militants and science pupils non-militants, those who took social studies "A" levels (geography, economics, history, accountancy, constitution general studies) were equally represented among militants and non-militants.

First year militants tended to enter the faculty of Social Science; the non-militants were dispersed through the three faculties (Social Science, Engineering, Business Studies). Non-militants were twice as likely as the militants to intend to devote their time predominantly to study. Drug use (except heroin) of every kind increased as militancy increased. Even though no statistically significant differences in the amount of drinking done by the three groups were found, militants were likely to get completely drunk more often.

Second year students at a provincial British university who were more likely to hold Reforming Views were described in another study (Startup 1974). A sample of students was asked whether they thought the present structure of their university and universities in general should be changed. Six categories of students ranging from "Reformers", those who see radical change as desirable and those who indicate the type of change required, to those who express no view on change were identified.

Students in the Social Sciences faculty included the largest proportion of reformers and those in the Applied Science faculty had the lowest. Relatively more men than women were found within each. Overall, and within every faculty, partial fulfillment or non-fulfillment of men's occupational expectations is correlated with the wish to see reforms. In the Arts faculty, a strong tendency was found for those whose intellectual expectations were partly fulfilled or unfulfilled

to include relatively more reformers. Dissatisfaction with the range of courses was strongly related to the tendency to favor reform. For men, dissatisfaction with personal contacts between students and staff was also associated with the tendency to hold reforming views.

Some evidence about the extent of support for protest among British students in 1969 and the characteristics of students who support and oppose protest was presented in another report (Hatch, 1972). Students in three universities were surveyed in February 1969. These institutions exemplified three different positions in regard to protest: No protest, direct actions by a minority, and protest through legitimate channels by a majority. Students were categorized in terms of their support for protest - those strongly supporting protest, those moderately supporting protest, and those opposed to protest. Only 14% of the total sample were strongly supporting protest, but half of the students moderately supported protest.

Surprisingly, the technological university in the sample, where a peaceful consensual protest had been held, showed the highest level of support. Within each faculty, the students at the technological university tended to be somewhat more inclined to protest, but overall the social scientists showed a distinctly higher level of support than the technologists. Still, at each university, the relationship between protest attitudes and student membership in a particular faculty was a weak one. Further, protestors and non-protestors were not significantly different as regards sex, age, schooling and social background. Generally speaking, the social background and ability levels of British students who were supporters and non-supporters of protest were not found to be different.

Protestors saw themselves as politically Left, but this perceived "Leftness" was not so clearly identified with support for any one political party. Most support for protest came from atheists and Jews while those who were uncertain or agnostic occupied a midway position. Protestors showed more tolerant racial attitudes, greater moral permissiveness and a higher valuation for ideas and culture.

A majority of the protestors were dissatisfied about the role students played in decision making, the amount of contact students had with academic staff, and the amount of university concern for the welfare of individual students. On these three issues, a considerably smaller percentage of non-protestors expressed dissatisfaction. More of the protestors put greater value upon education and ideas as ends in themselves, whereas more of the opponents of protest were likely to see a university education as a means towards certain vocational ends.

Hatch (1972) perceived a large place for symbolic issues in student movements and the absence of rationally utilitarian programs that embody a clear analysis of and distinction between ends and means. Radical students are attacking universities for not living up to professed values and are concerned with the gap between ideals and practice. Protestors criticize universities on the grounds of principles and ideals rather than usefulness or effectiveness!

Student Dissent Is a Social Political Process

The various scoial psychological explanations of Student Unrest have been criticized because too often radicals appear to be "explained away" in socio-psychological terms dissipating the worth of their protest largely by refusing to consider the ideological content of their

revolt or its criticisms of society (Salter, 1973). Several explanations of student unrest have been described as exercises in devaluation: Multiversity, Adolescence, Conspiracy, Permissive Family Socialization and Issues explanations.

The Multiversity argument proposes that the structural characteristics, particularly increased bureaucratization and routinization of universities, is a cause of student unrest; the Adolescence argument proposes that student militancy is little more than a glorified panty raid; while the Conspiracy argument proposes that the "Reds" are on the move again; the Permissive Family Socialization argument proposes that Activist students are attempting to "act out" the political values of their family; and the Issues argument proposes that student radicalism is an essentially superficial movement responding to immediate stimuli.

Salter (1973) holds that most of these analyses of student unrest are inadequate because they do not attempt to "understand" student action in Weber's terms. The ideas of the student movement have been implicitly labelled invalid by the supposed demonstration of how they were arrived at. He proposes that the social history of the politically active student has been such as to provide him with the opportunity of becoming aware of society's problems and the awareness has provided the motivation for political action. Student militancy involves an interaction between an individual's predisposition and his political environment.

Jones (1969), at that time a member of the New Left Review Editorial Committee, advanced the theory that student militancy is an overdetermined phenomenon. Three major forces have produced the contemporary

structure of the student movement: The sociological growth of intellectual labor, the political reversal of values, and the cultural acceleration of the generation gap. Students are not a class but a temporary occupation, apprentice intellectual workers who often experience higher education as an immediate alienation of themselves. The student situation itself has over-riding priority in understanding the student movement. The student movement has also been influenced by the fact that the liberal "pluralist" democracy which was so "celebrated by patriotic apologists" during the Cold War revealed itself as the "military juggernaut" responsible for untold death and destruction in Vietnam. The hysteria of the Cold War had previously smothered radical politics, but with International Detente, students were free to become a political force and the consequence was student strikes, sit-ins and riots. These events were expressions of a conviction that such protests would oblige the authoritarian institutions of advanced capitalism to reveal themselves and then show the true nature of repressive tolerance. A major factor in student unrest is the growing gap between generations, triggered off by the acceleration of scientific and technical change. Jones thinks that "each new generation travels through a different mental universe en route to adulthood." He suggests that a moral and aesthetic upheaval in the 1960s transformed the life styles of youth and these changes in mores have forced generations apart, creating an important precondition for an upsurge of student radicalism.

Wilson (1972) also thinks that student unrest is a manifestation of the generational struggle, and that a youth culture has largely been created by the entertainment industry. Another factor contributing

to campus dissent is the political philosophy that expansion in education is justified as a contribution to national productivity - Wilson states "The promise of governments that universities were a national investment has been quickly falsified by the disruption of universities by student protest." Public pronouncements about education have seriously weakened those traditional academic values which were far more effective in eliciting student commitment. Wilson thinks students do not start with ideological positions on issues. Issues are in most instances trivial! Student unrest is not a cause but a sympton of the latest malaise - dilution of the universities' traditional mission. In general, Wilson thinks that student disturbances are prompted by recent university failings, militant agitators, inherent tensions of the student condition, and a generational division which is promoted in the youth culture. He concludes "relative deprivation" is a widely invoked sociological theory to explain "deviant" and "compensatory" behavior. Perhaps it applies to student movements; perhaps behind the nebulous, self-contradictory idealism there lurks interest and wounded hopes for personal advantage as well as confusion and the search for meaning and identity."

Adelstein (1969) proposes that three contraditions within the British system of higher education have influenced student militancy. These contraditions are (1) the contradiction between the economically necessary expenditure to insure output of trained personnel and the government's persistent failure to meet its responsibility for the investment; (2) the contradiction between the stratifying functions of the educational system and the need to make opportunity really quick; (3) the contradiction between the collective and autonomous

nature of productive work and the individualist structure of contemporary education.

The British student revolt has been characterized in terms of issues, modes of action, the particular balance between local situations and wider politics that it achieves, and the relation of these activities to a party or ideological position (Crouch, 1972). Crouch thinks that contemporary British student protest has concerned itself with three themes: Authority, community, and the relationship between the university and society. However, the selection of issues which achieve any degree of success depends upon their potential for incorporation into the particular concerns of the "new Left." The history of student revolt has to a large extent involved particular problems, blunders or abuses of an authority on a campus which are the source of resentment among a wide circle of students, and then once a protest begins, the strategy is to try to relate these local concerns to global ideological ones.

Protest issues have involved student demands to be involved in decisions made by university authorities. However, many militant Left students want to be independent of university administrative machinery so that they can raise demands to which the university cannot accede and then possibly create the basis for a movement. Other issues have concerned a general complaint about an absence of community in the modern university. However, the activity of Left on this issue has more to do with developing a form of social relationships which might be described as communion not community. Communion is the spontaneous and deeply felt expression of untramelled, unchanelled sentiment!

Protest issues have dealt with the relationship between the university and wider society. To the Left, some protest issues show how the university in modern society has become a slave to the interests of capital and state. Crouch thinks that every university conflict can be seen in part as an attempt by the Left to gain support for their perspectives on the incidents concerned.

Student protest can also involve economic factors. Johnson (1968) suggests that underlying British student protest are deep seated factors which generate and maintain dissatisfaction. These factors include the democratization of university education, the assumption of governmental responsibility for providing most of the cost of university education, the bureaucratic character of the university, and the increasing affluence of contemporary society, especially the rising value of people's time. Johnson explains that students and faculty expect of the other more than they can deliver. In technical economic terms, there is a "dynamic disequalibrium" between expectations and realizations. This dynamic disequalibrium is reflected in the students' efforts to use political power to force the university staff to deliver more and in the staff's response that students are getting at least as much as they are entitled to. Johnson makes two other observations about student protest. First, the rhythm of the academic year is a feudal survival, geared inversely to the rhythm of agricultural production. This calendar tends to produce a maximum of anxiety and a minimum of organized effort about the end of the second and the beginning of the third term. Examinations at the end of each term might increase the economic cost of student protest and reduce psychological incentives. Second, the geography of universities

frequently reduces the cost of protest to the students by channelling academic traffic through restricted areas which can be blocked by a small number of students. Universities might invest in opening more doorways in university buildings and laying more and wider pathways which would make it more difficult for students to protest.

Current student discontent has been examined in terms of "the politics of the knowable" (Holmes, 1972). Militant students are seen as rejecting the past in relationships. This is a rejection of formalism, "formalism with all its strengths and weaknesses is what the protest is all about" (Holmes, 1972). The "old look" assumes there to be three parties to any statement of fact and these parties are independent. The first party is the knower, the second is the known, and the third is the past's imported formalism which are all definitions, measures and categorizations that are derived elsewhere. Students are attacking the "old look" by rejecting the integrity of the "third party" of lawful authority and rejecting the independence of the first two parties. The knower is not independent of the known nor are fellow knowers independent of each other. The "new look" involves an interfusion of the knower and the known in which the knower and the known crystallize out of their interaction. Detachment is illusory! Holmes thinks that both students and academic staff overstate their cases about these issues: "The staff in their aspirations to scientific respectibility all too frequently exhibit parochialism in their assumption of what 'must be,' the students with their dislike of 'authority' in any form, see such presumptions as but the intellectual rationalization of those that are attempting to maintain the inviolability of a political status quo."

Discussion and Conclusion

The history of British colleges and universities reveals many forms of protest (Fletcher, 1972 & Scott, 1973). Yet it is somewhat naive to generalize about this history, concluding that recent incidents of dissent are just another example of a historical phenomenon. The social situation surrounding dissent at Oxford in 1400 and the social situation at Oxford in 1974 are obviously not the same! To consider contemporary campus dissent as simply a historical recurrence is to focus on social and political symptoms without grasping underlying factors. For example, Fletcher's chronology of events extending from the 12th century to the 20th century is misleading if it is assumed that all of these events represent a similar phenomenon - student dissent!

Histories of student dissent are misleading when they lead to theories of causality. Because certain dissent events which in some ways are similar to present dissent events have happened periodically for the last 700 years, one need not conclude that dissent is either a natural phenomenon or a reflection of rapid social change. Those who read histories of student dissent may also fall into the trap of thinking there is nothing new about student dissent, it is just a painful, historical process which needs to be gone through periodically. Student dissent just does not go away. I would like to second Lipset (1971) when he states "A completely inactive student body is a much more curious phenomenon historically than one which is involved in some degree of activism. Any efforts to analyze the future of politics whether on the domestic or international scene will ignore the students at the peril of being in error."

Yet, it is possible to perceive some similarities in the social dynamics of the various instances of dissent which have occurred over the last 700 years in British universities. Bakke (1966) thinks that student activism is a function of the universal search of adolescent youth for an adult role in society, for self identity and social integration, and Lipset (1971) examines campus unrest in the wider context of social reform movements of past and present days.

An examination of the history of student dissent in British universities does reveal recurring tensions involving social change and higher education. Institutions of higher education in Britain have experienced challenges at various times in history, and the resulting campus dissent may be viewed as forms of institutional anxiety resulting from such challenges. For example, Sir Eric Ashby (1972) suggests that when forces in the social environment press for changes in a higher education system, they are likely to encounter two kinds of hereditary resistance - the inertia of the system to any change and the belief in the purpose of the system which is held by those engaged in it. He goes on - "a higher education system has its own articles of faith by which its practitioners live and these are not always consistent with the demands which society makes on the system." Dissent may be the result of changes in society which cause new demands on higher education.

This paper also examined research concerned with the relationship between characteristics of British students and their level of activism. These research findings do not lend themselves to any clear generalizations about student unrest. More important, this research can implicitly define the "Problem of Student Unrest" as person-centered.

Caplan and Nelson (1973) have described how the way "problems" defined in psychological research can determine whether attempts are made at remediation. Problem definitions, i.e. a study of the characteristics of student activists can influence the kinds of change strategies which either might or might not be developed. These authors (Caplan and Nelson, 1973) have clearly demonstrated a person-centered preoccupation and causal attribution bias in psychological research which often disregards the possible influence of external forces.

Various writers have espoused social, political and economic notions about student dissent based on surprisingly little empirical research. For example, several writers think that student unrest is a function of a generation gap resulting from rapid social change. However, the idea that the "generation gap" causes student dissent suffers under careful analysis. Research by Troll, Neugarten and Kraines (1969) reveals that two generations in a family have more similarity in basic values than do college students in the same generation. Furthermore, Lipset (1971) after examining various surveys of youth opinions conducted in the United States between 1965 and 1971, concluded that there are generation units among American youth who have highly disparate sentiments. Startup (1972) found no evidence that a British university experience leads to a closer identification with an age group which possesses a youth culture setting it off against older people. In contrast, the university experience seems to lead to a movement away from identification with people of the same age who lack a university experience. (See also Richard Flacks' Student activists: Result not revolt, Psychology Today, October 1967.)

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